

July 26, 1968

Rep. Henry S. Reuss
House of Representatives
Committee on Government Operations
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Reuss:

I appreciate your keeping me on your mailing list for news releases of the Research and Technical Program Subcommittee, like that dated for release Monday, July 29.

I also have to say that I was greatly disheartened by the substance of what I had to read particularly in the light of my long term admiration for your liberal and statesman like policies that I observed during the many years that I lived in Madison, Wisconsin. I will not quarrel with you about the urgency of conserving dollar exchange during a balance of payments emergency. I do believe that many, perhaps even all, of the projects that you list by title in your news release are important to human welfare and that they had been screened for particularly critical review by scientifically competent panels taking account of the more stringent criteria that should be placed upon foreign expenditures. Man is one species and there is a great deal that can be learned about human welfare and the human condition to the best advantage by studies in other countries. I wonder if you have taken the trouble to inquire more closely into the scientific justifications for the projects that you listed by title. I have only very slight information on most of them but they do not strike me as worthy of the derision that you would invoke upon them.

The real tragedy to which I would hope you would have addressed your energies is why we must be so poor that we have to adopt such stringent criteria. It is in the nature of scientific enterprise that many projects are necessarily gambles and that one really important hit difficult to predict in advance can readily pay for all of the others. Of course, when we are impoverished we cannot afford to spend funds on gambles of that kind. But why are we so impoverished!

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I think you know the answer to that as well as I do and I can only wish that you were devoting more of your energies to trying to lead our nation towards a greater level of social and economic productivity rather than sniping at these problematical examples that stand a very good chance of repaying the investment made in them.

I do not think that you can blame the Paulist state of our national economy on bad advice or wasteful expenditures by scientists!

It is impossible for me to know all of the positive things that you may be doing and if I have overlooked the other contributions that you may be making to the advancement of American culture and technical and economic strength I would be gratified to be better informed about them.

Sincerely,

~~John E. Edmiston~~
Professor of Genetics

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